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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Letter dated 30 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the concept note entitled "Peacekeeping operations, terrorism and violent extremism: challenges, opportunities and implications", which was drafted for the meeting of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations that I chaired on 24 June 2016 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 51, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 30 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note on the theme "United Nations peacekeeping, terrorism and violent extremism: challenges, opportunities and implications" for the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations

[Original: English]

Background

Senegal, as chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will hold a thematic discussion to consider the challenges, opportunities and implications of terrorism and violent extremism for United Nations (UN) peacekeeping. The discussion will bring together Security Council members and a broad range of Member States.

Terrorism and violent extremism as emerging issues for UN peacekeeping

Over the past two decades, the security environments of UN peace operations have become significantly more complex. Peacekeepers are today deployed in volatile and non-permissive contexts, often in the absence of an established peace agreement or, on occasion, without a political process underway. In many of these environments, a diverse range of state and non-state armed groups operate, many of which employ terrorism (asymmetric violence), including targeting of civilians and/or the UN to further their goals. The use of asymmetric and terrorist tactics by parties to conflict raises challenges for the safety and security of UN personnel and for the delivery of mandated tasks by UN peacekeepers. Over the past decade, the Security Council, the Secretariat and Member States have sought to enhance the mandate and capabilities of UN peacekeeping operations to negotiate the increased threats of asymmetric violence, in particular in contexts of protection of civilians' mandates.

More recent attention has focused on violent extremism as a subset of asymmetric violence. Part of the challenge in addressing this topic is that there is no shared definition of violent extremism in policy or intergovernmental circles, and groups that are often said to espouse violent extremism differ widely in their location, composition and tactics.[1] Nevertheless, violent extremism could be described as a commitment to violent means (i.e., terrorism) in order to attain goals that are incompatible with the international state system, an adherence to transnational violent ideologies and *a priori* rejection of negotiated political settlements. These features, particularly when combined with a justification of the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians and rejection of international humanitarian and human rights norms and standards, pose significant challenges for all areas of the UN work. The prevalence and growth in manifestations of violent extremism in areas of existing conflict,[2] however, pose particular challenges for the UN peace and security frameworks and instruments, of which the most visible is UN peacekeeping.

Peacekeeping within the UN framework for violent extremism

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[1] This is due to a range of political, ideological and legal factors, as well as the multidisciplinary approach which has been taken to study the phenomenon; see M. Nasser-Eddine *et. al.* (2011) *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review* (Edinburgh: Ministry of Defence, Australia).

[2] International Crisis Group (2016) "Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State", *Crisis Group Special Report*, 14 March.

protective equipment, including mine-resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles; and testing the use of new technologies, including the use of advanced aerial surveillance tools to enhance the safety and security of bases and convoys.

In Mali, despite the establishment of a peace agreement between the Government and key armed groups, the mission operates in an environment of continued low-level insurgency, targeted attacks on the UN and spectacular attacks on civilian targets (e.g. hotels, hostage taking). In addition to defending itself against a significant direct threat from multiple extremist groups, MINUSMA has a mandate to prevent and deter attacks against civilians by armed groups of any persuasion. For this protection purpose, as with other similarly-mandated missions, the Security Council has authorized the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In 2015, DPKO identified MINUSMA as a pilot Mission for CT/PVE national capacity building in the areas of rule of law and security. Efforts, in coordination with DPKO, CTED, CTITF, and other partners, include training and support to national security forces in first response, investigations, forensics analysis, and aspects of C-IED. MINUSMA is also playing a critical role in standing up the Specialized Counter Terrorism Judicial Unit and is supporting the Government's efforts to develop a national border security strategy aimed at preventing the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and proliferation of arms. MINUSMA is also supporting the development of a comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategy

A range of other peacekeeping operations, including MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNMIL, UNOCI, UNMISS and MINUSTAH are also mandated to support the capacity of national institutions and actors, particularly rule of law and security institutions. In line with Pillar III of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, UN peacekeeping operations, often have a comparative advantage as part of their programmatic support to the rule of law and security institutions, to contribute to counter terrorism capacity building efforts, inter alia, in judicial reform, the prevention of radicalization in detention facilities, security sector reform (SSR), border management and policing.,

Challenges

1- There is a need to adapt peacekeeping presences and activities to the emerging enviornment, including equip peacekeeping missions with the capabilities necessary to counter asymmetric threats and tactics through better access to intelligence, technology and IED threat mitigation programmes, while improving resilience through greater mobility and medical support capacity. There is also a need to consider how mandates tasks including in the areas of DDR and corrections support need to adapt in such environments.

2Addressing the dual threats of terrorism and 'violent extremism' and distinguishing terrorist groups from other non-state armed groups employing asymmetric violent tactics, as well as the diversity and fluidity of such groups, present a significant challenge for UN peacekeeping missions. Labelling armed groups "terrorists" or "violent extremists" can sometimes undermine a solid and nuanced understanding of these groups and the specific conflict contexts in which they operate, including their perception by local populations. This can limit the scope of missions to develop detailed analyses of the specificities of each context and/or group and to design tailored and appropriate responses. Moreover, the capacity of missions to analyse and assess such groups is often limited in the context of prevailing insecurity, the transnational operating patterns of these groups and limited

- What is the implication for relations with host States and local communities of UN peacekeeping engagement in addressing violent extremism?
- How could peacekeeping cooperate more effectively with other parts of the UN system on initiatives to counter and prevent violent extremism?
- What are the associated challenges and risks? To what extent can the Security Council mitigate those challenges, and how?